

## Book Review of *Everything She Thought She Wanted* By Elizabeth Buchan

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Project akhir ini menganalisis novel *Everything She Thought She Wanted* salah satu karya penulis fiksi terkenal Elizabeth Buchan. Tujuan dari penulisan project akhir ini adalah mengetahui kelebihan dan kelemahan novel *Everything She Thought She Wanted*. Penulis menyimpulkan bahwa kelebihan novel ini terletak pada tema dan karakter. Sedangkan kelemahannya terletak pada sudut pandang dan plot atau alur cerita.

Kata kunci: tema, karakter, sudut pandang, plot.

### **Introduction**

Women have always been interesting things to be discussed. A woman's heart is a deep ocean secret. And life always gives new stories, something that was unpredictable to be a part of the secret. Then, their story retold in a literary work called novel to inspire women around the world. A novel that the writer will discuss is written by Elizabeth Buchan, titled *Everything She Thought She Wanted*. The writer chooses *Everything She Thought She Wanted* to be reviewed because the writer finds it interesting to discuss about love and independence in this novel as the theme.

The purpose of this book review is to explain the strengths and weaknesses of this novel by analyzing the theme and the character of the two main character, Siena Grant who lives in the modern period and Barbara Beeching who lives in the conventional period. It is about the pursuit of happiness, the constraints of being a woman, the intricacies of marriage and family.

## Discussion

### 1. The strengths of this novel

#### 1.1 Character

According to Kennedy in *An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama* (Fifth Edition) (1991: 47), “A character is presumably an imagined person who inhabits story.” Siena and Barbara as the two main characters are independence and tough women. They are described as in following.

#### Independence

Hornby in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1987: 763) have noted Independence as “freedom to organize your own life and make your own decisions”.

Elizabeth Buchan describes the two main characters, Siena and Barbara as powerful characters. They are tough woman, independence and wise in making decisions. The figure of **Siena** who lives in the modern period has strong personality. The passion she had for her work made all the difference. Siena is a workaholic. She is always ambitious, focused and hard driving, but it makes her marriage didn't work well. She is also wise in making decisions. There are so many things to consider while she decides to move to America because she would be separate from her husband. She should make deep personal choices in her lives to determine a career and to have a child.

The figure of **Barbara** who lives in the conventional period also has strong personality. She takes good care of Ryder, her children, and she also handles her household by herself. Her husband's busyness makes her to be an

independent because she always doing anything by herself. She also improved her relationship with Amy without Ryder's interferences. She realized how difficult to have a daughter who are stubborn like Amy, but Barbara never give up. At least she and Amy reconciled and Barbara fulfill Amy's wishes and cleared her matters. She makes Amy realize her mistakes, Amy even start the conversation in advance with Barbara after their quarreling and makes Barbara cries.

### **Tough Woman**

Hornby in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1987) have noted Tough as "*strong enough to deal successfully with difficult conditions or situations.*" Elizabeth Buchan describes the two main characters, Siena and Barbara as a tough woman.

**Siena** is a tough woman that focuses on her own career, works hard to reach her dream as fashion consultant and get the project on American company. After failed in her first marriage and gets divorce, she is though, she put things back together and, after a year, she is involved with Charlie. It's also not easy for Siena when Charlie asks to start a family and have a baby. In the same time, she get the project on America, absolutely; Charlie didn't give Siena permission to leave. But her responsibility for her partners insisted Siena to make a decision. She shows a lot of courage to live in America without Charlie and develop her career. She often comes back to London in the weekend, it's her way to improve her relationship. Charlie thought that it's better if they stay together. Then he find a job in America. Finally, Siena really appreciates his efforts and decides to start to have family.

In the end she decided to compromise with herself, she realizes her role as a wife and really make a deep personal choices in her lives. It shows that she keeps herself positive and strong to maintain her marriage, although what she's done is not as tough as her husband.

The figure of **Barbara** is also a tough woman, she's willing to do anything for her family. In fact, motherhood is one of the best proofs to show how strong and tough women can be. Despite her own stress, Barbara always attends to her to-do list, which usually involves the children and cares for her husband, Ryder. She always tries to provide what her husband wanted. She even ignores her own feelings and still trying to realize the wishes of her husband to have another son. Losing a baby though miscarriage is one of the most difficult experiences that a parent, especially wife will ever endure. And it shows how selfish Ryder as a husband. It also shows that she is able to stand up for herself.

## **1.2. Theme**

According to Kennedy in *An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama* (Second Edition) (1991: 144), "*Theme is whatever general idea or insight the entire story reveals*". The theme of *Everything She Thought She Wanted* are love and independence.

### **Love**

According to Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving* (2006: 2), "*Love is not a noun or object, but a verb or practice. How you practice love with those around you depends on your approach and understanding of the existential problems of*

*your life and, at the same time, determines the wholeness you will experience as a human being.”*

### **The Power of Love**

Love plays an important role in *Everything She Thought She Wanted* because many moments in the story start from something called love. Love is more easily experienced than defined. What love is depends on where you are in relation to it. Love for parents, partners, children, country, neighbor, God and so on all have different qualities. Each has its variants, such as; blind, one-sided, tragic, steadfast, fickle, reciprocated, misguided, and unconditional. And love feels differently to every person who feels it. The writer suggests that the commitment is needed, all love is a kind a passionate commitment that we nurture and develop, even though it usually arrives in our lives unbidden. That's why it is more than just a powerful feeling. Love without the commitment, it is nothing. Love without the passion, it is just dedication. And love without nurturing, even the best can wither and die.

The Power Of Love can be applied in difficult situations to make things better. In fact, in many stories it's the solution to everything. There is no love without sacrifice, that is why a close relationships require sacrifice. In *Everything She Thought She Wanted*, Buchan wants to show that women are not as tough as man. There are alot of sacrifice needed to maintain the relationship. The two main characters has a sacrifice, but not as much as what their husbands does. However, the writer don't think all of the sacrifices made in this novel were made just for the sake of love.

The power of love, illustrated by **Siena** and **Charlie**. Based on the story, both Siena and Charlie have failed in their previous marriage. That is why they have more effort to maintain their second marriage and seek the best solution to resolve their problem. The problem they have is Charlie want to have children and a house but Siena was not ready and she insisted to live in an apartment. Siena also decided to leave London and moved to America. This makes Siena must be intensively round trip from America to London. Charlie thinks that he had to do something for his wife. So, the first thing he did is deciding to move to America in order to be with his wife. Of course, leaving the work and move is really hard. Charlie needs several time to settle all of these.

Charlie has tried the best effort to impress Siena and get her back. He still holds his career, it means that he still holds the responsibility as Siena's husband. The second thing he does is to collect money to buy a house there; Siena impressed and appreciates over Charlie's maturity and his love. Finally, Siena is touched by realizing a great sacrifice conducted by Charlie. How hard for Charlie to start a new careers and a new life in America. Then, she decided to start having family. Their power of love makes both of them put their ego away, especially Siena. It is important to compromise on the problems that can't be resolved. The ways to strengthen their relationship are conducted by Charlie, and he has maintained his marriage. He found the result of the sacrifices he made.

In another story, love comes unexpectedly. Throughout this story many sacrifices are made, some leading to love and some leading to downfall. These kind of love illustrated by **Barbara, Ryder** and **Alexander**. When the relationship

of Barbara and Ryder is not going really well, Alexander comes and fill the emptiness. Barbara and Ryder have been married for twenty-four years. But, there is a situation where love carried Barbara on an affair with a dashing young psychiatry student, Alexander. This is unconditional feeling which could not be handled by Barbara because Alexander is always trying to get her sympathy. Of course this is not justified. She shouldn't have an affair while she thought that she wasn't able to accept the risk of losing her husband and family.

In the other hand, Ryder who doesn't know about Barbara affairs thinks that his relationship with Barbara less harmonious because he's too busy with his work. Ryder try to make a solution, he plans a romantic trip to Switzerland to make their relationship better. Ryder also improves the loving relationship with his children. He blesses for the wedding of Roy and his girlfriend, Victoria; and with Barbara as a mediator between him and Amy, he allowed Amy to get the job as she likes. Ryder gives sincerity and trust to Barbara, that is why she doesn't want to make him disappointed and decided to end her love affair.

Barbara wants to end her love affair and keep it as a secret. She realized that she did not want to lose Ryder. At least, the power of love makes Barbara realizes that her love and obsession can make people around hersuch as Ryder, her children, and Sophie who felt in love with Alexander feels disappointed. When she find herself pregnant, she doesn't tell that the baby is Alexanders son. By covering her pregnancy she was being unfair with the baby, Alexander and Ryder. Barbara won't hurt her family, but she hides her love affair and it can't prove that. The writer feels that what she has done is wrong. Barbara will not solve the

problem by covering her mistakes. No matter how far she tries to run from her sin, it's always going to be there right behind her. She had to put her ego away because she realizes she shouldn't waste so much love from her family and by keeping her mistakes she would deceive herself.

## **2. The Weakness of *Everything She Thought She Wanted***

*Everything She Thought She Wanted* is the same as other books. It has strengths and weaknesses. This novel is recommended to read especially for women readers because it has an interesting story and makes us curious about what do women want. We can take many positive messages and Buchan's way to describing the story is wonderfully entertaining but it still has several weaknesses.

The novel written by the first point of view. Siena and Barbara becomes the two main characters in their own stories, and these stories are written from their point of view, so the themes are only told by them. They tell their own version and express their justification for themselves. The details in the novel are not completed; the author did not describe where the event took place in precise and the person involved in details.

The author writes great story with flashback and forward plot in their internal and external conflicts, each story tells in chapters alternately but no link between them. The flashback and forward plot are a good thing, it less boring but it will create confusion. This is the same as combining two novel narrated into one. She tries to switch back and forth, starting on Siena for a few chapters, then returning to Barbara for a time. It makes rather disconcerting, the reader will assume that there is no connection between the two main characters. For instance,



the story in chapter 1 and 2 begins with a conflict from Siena Grant's fear to having family. Then chapter 3 and 4, the conflict from Barbara Beeching started while she met Alexander Liberty in the Andrews's spring cocktail party. After that it goes back to the first meeting of Siena and Charlie and their previous marriage. In the next chapter the story goes back to the first meeting of Barbara and Ryder, and their conflict with their children. Then the story goes to Siena's career in America. The link between the two characters is revealed on the last chapter. The reader must give more attention because it will make the readers confused about setting, especially the setting of Siena's story where it moves from London to America and from America to London.

## CONCLUSION

*Everything She Thought She Wanted* is one of Elizabeth Buchan's bestseller novels of women's fiction. This novel tells the story of the lives of two married middle-aged women, Siena Grant and Barbara Beeching that inspired every woman in the world. This novel is really interesting because it has some strength such as characters that gives an example about independence and tough women and themes which explain about love in maturity and the power of love itself.

Eventhough Elizabeth Buchan's *Everything She Thought She Wanted* is an interesting novel with her inspiring story, it has flashback and forward plot which good, it less boring but it will create confusion. The novel also written by first point of view, so the themes are only told by Siena and Barbara as the main

characters. They tell their own version and express their justification for themselves. That's why the readers should be cautious in accepting the message saved on it.

*Everything She Thought She Wanted* is really recommended for adult especially women readers. The characters can be such an inspiration for the readers that there is no happiness without love and how important family values. Since this novel brings the meaning of love to find a true happiness.

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